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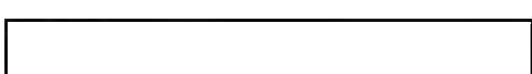
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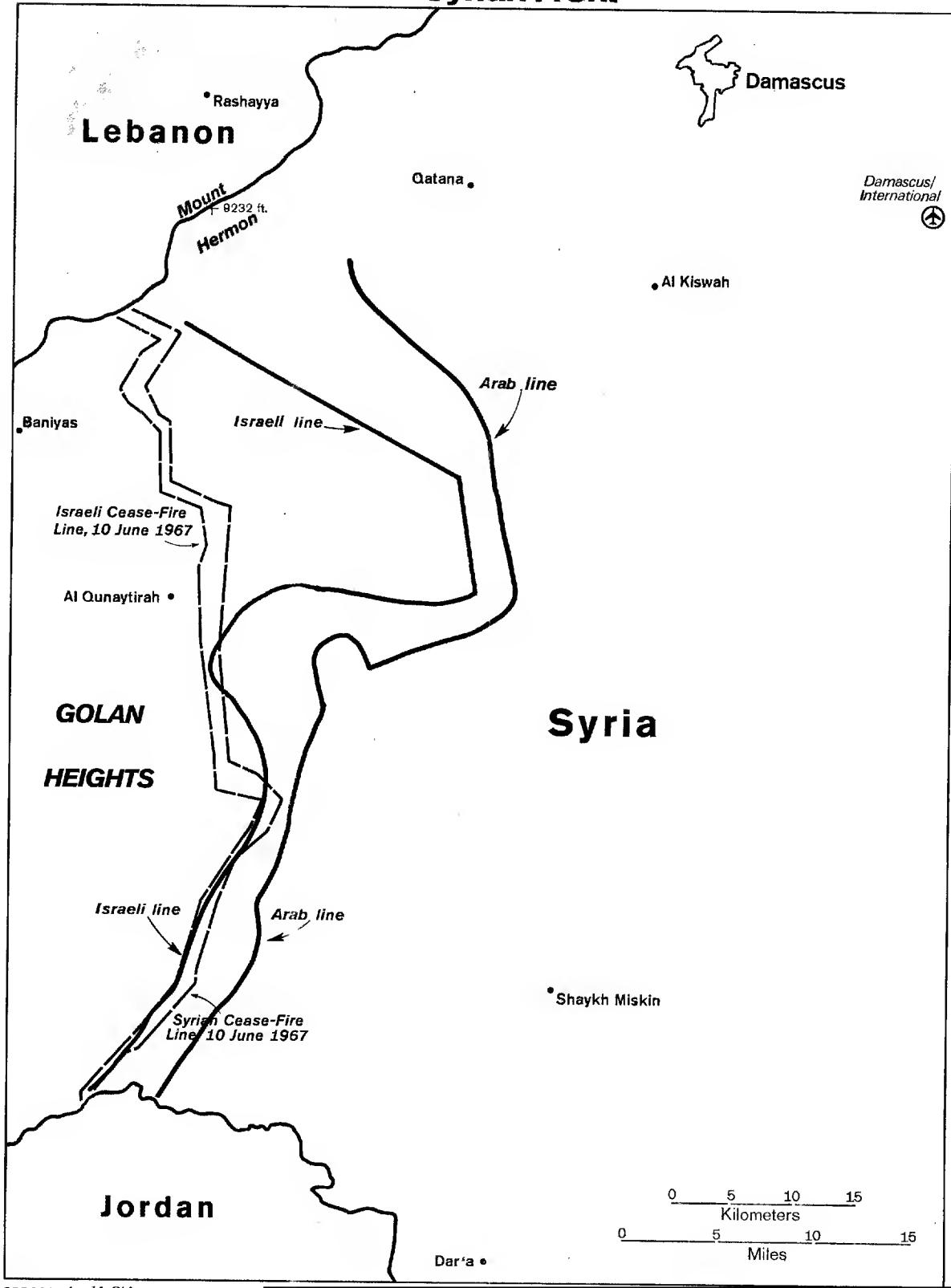
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Syrian Front

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ISRAEL-SYRIA: Israeli military forces maintained a high level of vigilance throughout the Pass-over weekend.

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[REDACTED] Limited ground fighting between Israeli and Syrian forces occurred on both days.

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A senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official told Ambassador Keating late last week that it is unlikely Syria would enlarge the scope of the hostilities. Mrs. Yael Vered, director of the Mediterranean and Middle East Division of the ministry, said that she did not believe Syria would risk acting alone and that it is "entirely unlikely" that Egypt would support Syria if major fighting broke out on the Golan front.

Mrs. Vered attributed the continued shelling by the Syrians to three considerations: an attempt by the Syrians to pressure Tel Aviv as Cairo had done during Egyptian-Israeli disengagement talks, an effort to satisfy hard-liners in Syria who opposed Asad's policy of seeking disengagement with Israel, and an attempt to impress upon the Soviets the seriousness of the situation prior to Asad's visit to Moscow on April 10. The Syrians may also be trying to make a similar impression on the US prior to the arrival in Washington this week of a Syrian envoy for disengagement talks.

Mrs. Vered said that she did not think the USSR was encouraging the Syrians to resume full hostilities, but that because of Soviet support for hard-line Syrian positions and massive military assistance, the Syrians believed they had carte blanche support for whatever course of action they wanted to take.

If Mrs. Vered's statement is an accurate representation of the Israeli Government's views regarding Syrian intentions, a major pre-emptive strike by Tel Aviv seems unlikely at this time. Nevertheless, continued action by the Syrians, especially if the number of Israeli casualties should be high, could bring on limited punitive actions

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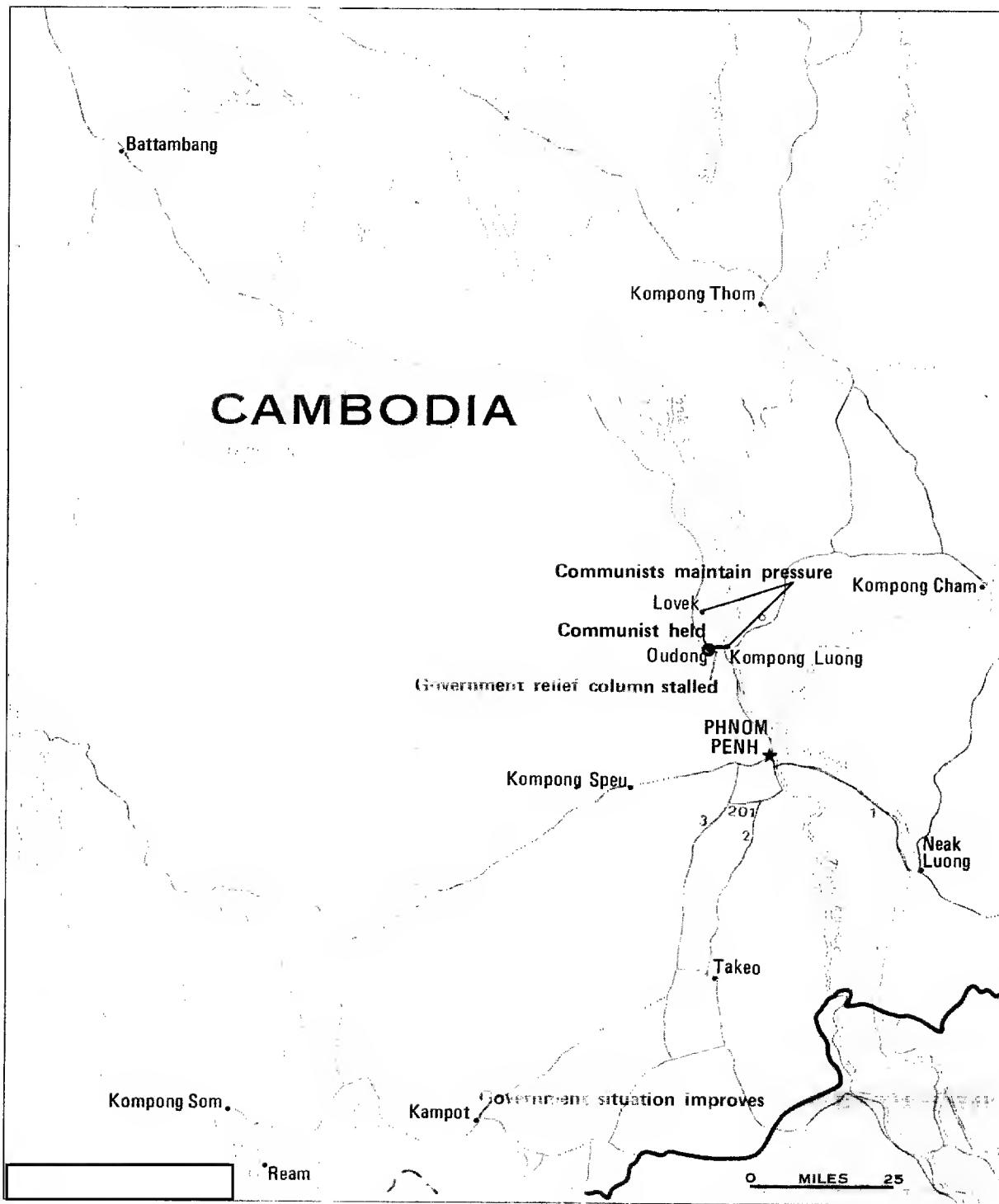
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ISRAEL: In a move to force the cabinet to accept collective responsibility for Israeli shortcomings at the beginning of the October war, Defense Minister Dayan has offered to resign if the entire cabinet also steps down. Dayan has suggested that Prime Minister Golda Meir then form a new government in which he would be willing to serve in a ministry other than Defense.

The Executive Committee of Mrs. Meir's Labor Party is scheduled to meet tonight to discuss its position regarding the Agranat Commission's report on the conduct of the October war. Mrs. Meir may choose that occasion to decide how to react to Dayan's offer.

If she announced the resignation of her government, it would not necessarily require the calling of new Israeli elections. President Katzir could choose a party leader, presumably Mrs. Meir again, to form a new government.



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CAMBODIA: The government's situation at the besieged southwestern provincial capital of Kampot has improved somewhat, but Cambodian Army forces northwest of Phnom Penh have made little headway in their effort to retake Oudong.

Much of the credit for the improved situation at Kampot goes to the Khmer air force, whose capabilities have slowly but steadily increased. Timely and effective close air support, together with the infusion of fresh infantry reinforcements, has enabled Kampot's defenders to re-establish their northern defensive perimeter and to begin operations to retake territory on their southeastern perimeter.

The Khmer Communists, however, are continuing to maintain pressure on the city. Ground and shelling attacks were reported over the weekend against Kampot's defensive perimeter, and a few rocket rounds fell in the city. Naval resupply craft approaching Kampot from the south also came under insurgent fire.

The government's effort to retake Oudong continues to flounder. Cambodian Army forces advancing along the Route 5 axis toward Oudong remain stalled a mile short of the town. The government's beachhead at Kompong Luong further to the east has come under heavy Communist fire recently

Its loss would isolate the 2,500-man government relief force.

Meanwhile, northwest of Oudong, insurgent attacks have further reduced the southern and eastern defenses of the government base at Lovek. Some 2,000 Cambodian troops, along with more than 25,000 civilians, are holed up at Lovek.

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EUROPE: The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe recessed on April 5 after reaching a compromise on a major issue, the "inviolability of frontiers."

The Soviets, who had wanted wording that would state or imply that existing borders in Europe are immutable, made several concessions that ended months of debate on the text of the principle concerning borders. The English-language text states that the participating states regard each other's frontiers as "inviolable" and that they will refrain from "assaulting" these borders. The participants also pledge not to make demands for or to seize or usurp each other's territory. The implication that the participating states have rejected only violent changes of borders will be reinforced by a specific reference to the possibility of peaceful change in borders in another of the principles resulting from the conference.

The West Germans, who desired a reference to the possibility of peaceful change in the text of the principle concerning frontier inviolability, initially rejected the Soviet compromise, reportedly because of the pressure on the Brandt government from the opposition Christian Democrats. After being urged by the other Western participants, the Germans eventually accepted the text.

The Soviets presumably accepted the compromise in an effort to speed up the work of the conference and to encourage the Western participants to offer concessions on other matters, such as the issue of freer movement of people and ideas between East and West. Moscow, in addition, wants the conference to be capped by a summit meeting in July. Party leader Brezhnev, who reportedly follows developments at the conference himself, has already written several Western leaders to propose an early summit. The Soviets also want the conference to adopt some type of follow-up machinery so that they will have a voice in future European developments. The Soviets probably will seek Western agreement on at least these matters following the resumption of talks on April 22.

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FRANCE: The Gaullist party's central committee yesterday gave its support in France's presidential race to former prime minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas. The decision marks the end of the road for backers of Prime Minister Pierre Messmer and takes the party into the election at least nominally united.

Chaban will also be supported by the minor Centrist Party in the governing coalition. He will not, however, receive the backing of the Gaullists' major partner, the Independent Republicans, according to their leader Valery Giscard d'Estaing. Giscard will hold a press conference today at noon to announce whether he himself will run. Giscard could choose to throw his support behind Edgar Faure, who leads the left wing of the Gaullists even though he is not a party member. Faure is now president of the National Assembly.

Ultra-Gaullist Christian Fouchet, who left the party in 1971 because he believed it was no longer true to De Gaulle's tenets, has also announced his candidacy. Chaban will also face Socialist chief Francois Mitterrand--who is expected to announce his candidacy officially after a party meeting today--and several splinter party candidates from the extreme right and left in the first round of the election on May 5.

Still others, such as center-reformer Jean Lecanuet, may enter the presidential race before the filing deadline of April 16.

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LIBYA: President Qadhafi reportedly signed and issued an announcement--released on April 6--transferring his administrative and ceremonial duties to Prime Minister Jallud. So far, the move appears to have been voluntary and there is no evidence that Qadhafi's authority has been significantly diminished. The "business as usual" atmosphere in Tripoli suggests that the local community sees little significance in the announcement.

The carefully worded announcement said that Qadhafi is "exempt" from his "customary" protocol and administrative duties. It is made clear, however, that he will retain all important duties, including his position as commander in chief of the armed forces. Although Qadhafi's role as chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council was not specifically mentioned, the announcement carefully noted that the powers and responsibilities of the council would not be affected.

Over the past several weeks there have been rumors of grumbling within the council and government over Qadhafi's high-handed behavior. Some key council members reportedly have pressed Qadhafi to moderate his policies and to give them a greater role in decision-making. [redacted]

[redacted] this friction has led Qadhafi to consider a major shake-up in both the council and the cabinet.

In the past when faced with such discord, Qadhafi has frequently withdrawn or threatened to resign in an effort to get his own way. This latest move--whether or not it was approved by the council--may be another attempt by the Libyan leader to upstage

his colleagues. By removing himself from the frustrations of daily rule and seeking the role of supreme arbitrator and ideologue, Qadhafi may feel better able to reinforce his control at home and to bolster his flagging image in the Arab world. This time, however, he is not dealing from a strong position, and his partial withdrawal may presage more turmoil in the hierarchy.

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